

## **Cultural Diversity of Serbia through System of Cultural Dimensions**

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### **Abstract**

Cultural diversity is the driving force of development, not only regarding the economic growth, but as the mean of achieving better intellectual, emotional, moral, social and business climate in the world. On General Conference 2001, the UNESCO manifested this opinion by adopting the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* which affirms that: "...cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature". For that matter, Serbia, being the country with rich cultural heritage and tradition, has a special role and responsibility in promoting and preserving its culture, but also the cultural diversities of South-eastern Europe. These efforts are necessary, not only to preserve cultural-historical identity, but because of the economic prosperity and successful business cooperation of the entire region. Therefore, in its relations with Serbia and with the entire region, the European Union has specially emphasised strengthening of intercultural connections and promoting of cultural diversity to achieve peace, cooperation and progress, in this region. Accepting and endorsing cultural diversity, by getting to know dimensions of your own and of the other cultures (which are especially supported by innovative use of informational technologies, media, educational systems, management, business and marketing) encourage the dialogue between civilizations and cultures, which fortifies their mutual respect and understanding. Hence, it is significantly important to be acquainted with the cultural dimensions of Serbia in business and management. That is, to perceive the way those dimensions are expressed in business environment, considering the fact that acknowledging and accepting their existence is prerequisite for successful business collaboration and communication.

**Key words:** Cultural diversity, Serbian culture, cultural dimensions, south - east Europe, intercultural dialogue

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Precisely for these reasons, the cultural diversity has become the most important subject in modern world. *The Convention of the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*<sup>34</sup>, which was ratified by 78 countries in 2007, affirms that: “This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity”.

**Culture is the system of gained knowledge and beliefs of certain group of people, and it affects attitude formation, behaviour, feelings and opinion of members of that group**<sup>35</sup> UNESCO defines culture as: “...set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of joint life, value systems, traditions and beliefs”<sup>36</sup>.

Also, “Culture should be understood as creational cognitive system, that is the system of knowledge, beliefs and values that exists in minds of its members”<sup>37</sup>. Therefore, we could say that culture has the same significance for human collective as personality, or character, has for a person. Thus, culture determines the uniqueness of group of people in the same way our personality makes us unique as individuals. Hofstede defines culture as “*the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from others*”<sup>38</sup>.

**The system of cultural values** is the essence of a culture. Cultural values are our basic assumptions of what is good and

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<sup>34</sup> UNESCO *The Convention of the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 2007, <http://www.portal.unesco.org>

<sup>35</sup> Olga Zečević Stanojević, *Evropsko kulturno okruženje*, Evropski univerzitet, Beograd, 2007

<sup>36</sup> UNESCO, Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001, <http://www.unescodoc.unesco.org>

<sup>37</sup> B. Žikić, Kognitivna antropologija i nematerijalna kulturna baština, Glasnik Etnografskog muzeja, Beograd, 2006, br. 71, str. 11-23

<sup>38</sup> Greet Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences*, Sage Publications, London, 2000

what is bad; clean or dirty; honest or dishonest; pretty or ugly; moral or immoral; normal or abnormal... Hofstede calls them “software of the mind”<sup>39</sup>, and these assumptions differ between members of different cultures, as different responses to external influences of the surroundings. For that reason, members of one culture will consider to be their moral responsibility to protect a friend in trouble, even if that means not telling the truth for that friend’s sake; while this kind of behavior will cause disapproval and conviction of some other culture’s members, since that kind of action may be seen as violations of general rules, and therefore, dishonesty.

Cultural values have deep roots in our mind and are gained in early childhood, first in family, than in school and later in wider social surroundings. Precisely, this is the reason why usually we are not fully aware of our values and we consider them to be generally accepted; until we become acquainted with the different system of cultural values.

Cultural values are invisible *per se* until they become evident in our behavior. As such, they are visible for an external observer, *however their cultural meaning is invisible and it lies in the way it is interpreted by the members of a certain culture*<sup>40</sup>.

## **2. Cultural Dimensions and Their Affect on Management and Business**

Cultures have always represented the world in the eyes of that culture’s members. The world around us, our surroundings, asks every culture the identical questions and offers them various response options. Different cultures have simply made different choices at the very beginning: some cultures chose to drive on the right side of the street, while others prefer to do it on the left side; in most of the Western cultures, surname comes second, after the first name, while the situation in Japan is reverse, and it is probably because a family is considered to be more important than

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Greet Hofstede, *Culture’s Consequences*, Sage Publications, London, 2000

an individual. These opposites can be seen as inverted mirror images<sup>41</sup>. They don't exclude each other, but are complementary and give new perspectives.

Some researchers (Hofstede, Trompenaars) have done great work among different cultures of the world and therefore, we can have precise collected statistical data; while others have empirically described characteristics of cultural dimensions so we can compare them with Serbian culture and establish its position among those cultural dimensions. In management and business, these cultural dimensions, in a very subtle but unambiguous way, have influence practically in every aspects of business; starting from organization, company's structure, through planning and management, awarding and motivating the employees, control and management's style and leadership.

#### **a) Cultural Dimension with Regard to the Concept of Time**

Researchers of cultures in management and business have interpreted differently the time orientation dimension, taking into consideration all relations within cultures between time and business. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck consider that a man thinks universally about time in different categories of *past*, *present* and *future*<sup>42</sup>. Trompenaars shares their opinion but he also believes that not all of the mentioned time categories are treated equally.

Our perception of time is under the great influence of our culture, considering the fact that *time* is an idea and not an object. Time is an important dimension of the manner in which we organize our experiences and activities; and the way we conceive it, for example, will affect our planning, strategy making and coordination of activities with other people.

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<sup>41</sup> F.Trompenaars and C.Hampden-Turner, *Riding th Waves of Culture*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1998

<sup>42</sup> Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner

Traditionally, Serbian culture is predominantly oriented towards the past. According to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, in the field of planning, past-oriented cultures will recreate the behavior that has already been established. Also, these cultures tend to ascribe status based on age, social class, sex, ethnicity and professional qualifications.

Time orientation significantly affects the way some cultures perceive societal changes. In every change the continuity is also included; that is, the tendency to maintain some of the aspects of the culture in order to preserve the identity. Past-oriented cultures deal with their past and their present and do not accept any changes until they are utterly sure that their cultural-historical heritage is safe and protected in time to come. Understanding of this notion is especially important for those foreigners who are trying to introduce some new business ideas in Serbia; but as well, for the innovators in business who also belong to these past-oriented cultures. Becoming aware how our own cultural values shape our behavior and the way of thinking usually is the most difficult assignment in these cultures.

According to Hofstede<sup>43</sup> and Trompenaars<sup>44</sup>, cultural dimension of time also clearly distinguishes between *short-term* and *long-term oriented cultures*. These researches position Serbia among *long-term oriented countries*, together with Portugal, Czech Republic, Hungary and Austria.

Companies that work in *long-term cultures* are focused on building the strong position on the market, and are not interested in instant results. Managers, usually family members or close friends, have sufficient time and resources to give their long-term contribution. In these cultures it is very important to have personal network of acquaintances with accomplished long-term interpersonal relationships; and in Serbia this is called *to pull some string*. The potential of *pulling strings* is for life, and nobody wants to jeopardize it for some short-term profit.

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<sup>43</sup> Greet Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences*, Sage Publications, London, 2000

<sup>44</sup> F. Trompenaars, C. Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves of Culture*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1998

Furthermore, *time* does not mean the same in different cultures and it provides the members of some culture to coordinate their activities, which is very significant in the context of business. For example, the time of some meeting can be approximate or precise; the established deadlines for assignments can be essentially important or merely directions on the path. For most of the people of Western cultures, time represents precious goods. They save, spend and waste time, because: *Time is money!* This perception of time leads them to live in impeccable time schedule. On the other side, for Eastern and Southern cultures, such as Mediterranean or South-eastern cultures, with Serbian culture included, time is less tangible and more elastic; hence, life is organized in more flexible and relaxed manner.

Just like every culture has its own sign language, they also have what Edward T. Hall defines “the silent language”<sup>45</sup>. It is important to understand its meaning, because when we take for granted our own time system and we project it to other cultures, we miss to read hidden messages and we discard ourselves the significant feedback. In respect of time orientation, Hall distinguishes to types of cultures: *monochronic* and *polychronic*; while, Trompenaars and Turner<sup>46</sup> define them as *sequential* and *synchronous time oriented cultures*. In *monochronic*, or *sequential*, cultures time is perceived and used in linear mode. It is the path extended from the past towards the future. Time is divided into segments, sequences, and it has the form of a timetable that renders a man to concentrate on only one thing at a time. In cultures like this, normally, a schedule has the priority over every other aspects and it is treated as unchangable. Therefore, members of monochronic cultures do not like interruptions, which can lead to isolation among people. Time can be seen as a room in which, in a certain moment, some people are welcome, while others are forbidden to enter. There is time and place for everything. Every change provokes insecurity and leads to displacing the entire line of actions. This is the reason why

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<sup>45</sup> Edward T.Hall, *The Silent Language*, Anchor Books, New York, 1990

<sup>46</sup> F.Trompenaars and C.Hampden-Turner, *Riding th Waves of Culture*, MCGraw-Hill, New York, 1998

cultures like these insist on punctuality and every delay is seen as sign of disrespect, disorganization and sloppiness. Thus, maybe we could say that members of monochronic cultures, more than doing the right thing, they prefer doing the thing right.

On the other side, *polychronic*, or *synchronous*, cultures are quite the opposite. The concept of time is understood as a cycle with intervals that repeat in certain rhythms and seasons, just like the nature. Therefore, we could say that this time orientation is more adjusted to the natural rhythm of life. Members of these cultures want to do the right thing, no matter if it changes the deadlines or plans. It usually means that they'll do more things at the same time, since there is one goal but several paths can lead to it. Time is a subjective and the meaning of time is treated as such. We could say that certain people deserve special attention and it is crucial to give them enough time, at any moment; the priorities are respected, and even unconsciously, the schedule and the rhythm of life are subordinated to the needs of those people. For example, members of Serbian culture, just like people that come from Mediterranean, Latin American and Arabic culture, will end or delay even their most important meeting in order to receive a phone call from a family member; or they can be late to some meeting because they might happen to meet some good friend on their way. These cultures are very tolerant towards being late, which can almost be welcome considering the fact that both parties are allowed to finish some unplanned important business.

In order to function effectively in polychronic cultures, for example in Serbia, it is important to learn and understand the local language of time, because polychronic cultures tend to differ in the life rhythm and priority system.

## **b) Cultural Dimension with Regard to the Concept of Space**

Just like time, the concept of space is also perceived distinctively within different cultures. However, according to Hall every culture has its concerns about space; hence, they perceive their territories and their personal space (that is the proximity

between the people in an interaction). Every live creature has its visible space limit (skin) that separates it from the exterior world. Nevertheless, this visible limit is also surrounded with numerous invisible limits, which can be more difficult to perceive and to see, but are still very real and existing. These other limits start with individual (personal) space, and end with being part of somebody's territory'.

Marking the territory, which is the inborn characteristic of living creatures, represents the act of claiming the right on it, possessing and defending it; and it is the vital link in the chain of events that are essential for survival. The tendency to mark their territory is highly developed with humans and it is under the strong cultural influence. According to Edward Hall<sup>47</sup>, every person has an "invisible space bubble" that can spread or shrink depending on: the relationship with people that surround the person; emotional condition of the person; his or her cultural heritage and the person's activity. This is what a personal space means and only few people are briefly allowed to come into it. The changes that can happen inside the "bubble", caused by the lack of space or mess, may provoke feelings of unpleasantness or even aggression. However, these "invisible bubbles" vary from culture to culture. For example, they are very big in Northern Europe and therefore, people stand at the distance. On the other hand, in Southern Europe, which includes Serbia as well, these "bubbles" are smaller and for that reason, what is considered to be normal for these cultures, for the people of Northern Europe is considered to be intimate relationship. Therefore, this could mean that for them members of Southern cultures are getting "too close" during their normal everyday interactions.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck<sup>48</sup> discern three cultural variants of relationship towards the concept of space: *private*, *mixed* and *public*. These variants define the way some culture is oriented towards the space that surrounds it, how it perceives its use and especially how some culture comprehends the meaning of property over the space. Hence, *the private orientation* believes

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<sup>47</sup> Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language*, Anchor Books, New York, 1990

<sup>48</sup> Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, *Variations in Value Orientations*, Peterson, New York, 1991



that the space is for the owner's exclusive use and it defines wider and narrower<sup>49</sup> space that surrounds it as a part of its territory. Usually, when the space owner feels like other people are invading his or her space, the safeguards are implemented. On the other side, *the public orientation* perceives the space as something that is available to everybody. While, in *the mixed orientation* the perspective of differing between private and public, depends on the context and current circumstances.

The space orientation has great influence on management and business functioning; especially in the field of communication and when it comes to arranging the office space or the business space. Managers that work in private-oriented cultures will mostly base their communication *one-on-one* and will have tendency towards secrecy and holding the information for themselves. The information is power and it is not available to everyone. The offices in these cultures are closed type, completely separated and possibly private; that is, each office has its own door.

Contrary to that, those who work in public-oriented cultures will probably establish numerous informational networks and open interactions and will make sure that the information flow is free and available to everyone. Normally, offices in these cultures are opened type, with tables that can be only separated with partitions; and if the private offices even exist, their doors are usually open.

In the mixed-oriented cultures, such as Serbian, managers do the selection of information and pass on only the information they believe to be necessary for realization of the job. According to that, the office space is usually divided into formal working section, which contains smaller offices, bigger space for the meetings and specially made space for less formal occasions.

### **c) Cultural Dimension with Regard to Environment**

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<sup>49</sup> Compare it with E.T. Hall's *personal space* (AN)

The man's survival has always implied the harmony or the battle with nature: winds, floods, droughts, cold weather, earthquakes, volcanoes, etc. Depending on the climate, cultures had to discover their ways to try to subordinate the nature or to adjust to it. The economic development of a man can also be seen as gradual strengthening of funds and finding the modes to tame the forces of nature. The evolution of society has brought to transforming the original fear that the nature might destroy human existence into the fear that man might destroy the nature.

However, natural forces are not the only factor of surroundings that man has to deal with. It is also necessary to protect oneself from other people, whether they belong to the same culture or not, but one should also try to understand the unknown reality.

New challenges and dilemmas are constantly imposed to a man by surroundings and environment. The uncertain future is basic life fact and different cultures try to deal with it in different modes that fall within the domain of technology, law and religion. Technology includes every human creation that helps us to defend from the insecurities of the very force of nature. Laws, which refer to every written and unwritten rule that conducts socially acceptable behavior, help us to protect ourselves from the insecurities and other people's unpredictable behavior. Finally, religion (which includes our learning about the unknown) and science (which includes our knowledge about what is known) may help a man to accept the insecurities he cannot defend himself from. The line between defending from the insecurities and accepting them is fluid. Many of our defense modes are meant to control the unknown, but actually from the objective point of view that is not the case. However, they do help us sleep more calmly.

Certain cultures differ on the basis of level of feeling threatened in ambiguous situation<sup>50</sup>, for that reason they have developed some beliefs and institutions in order to try to avoid that kind of state, which is the feeling of insecurity. Therefore, we

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<sup>50</sup> Greet Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences*, Sage Publications, London, 2000

can talk about cultural dimension of *universalism* and *particularism*<sup>51</sup>.

Serbia is in the front line of the countries with explicit cultural *particularism*, followed by Poland, South Korea and Russia. Particularism is focused on the special nature of current circumstances: A person is not merely “a citizen”, but also my friend, brother, spouse, child or someone very special to me, who has exclusive rights to my love. Therefore, I need to support and protect that person no matter what the rules say. At the same time, the others rarely deserve that kind of love and I don’t tend to give as much of my attention to them.

According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner<sup>52</sup>, but to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck as well, there are two basic cultural orientations regarding the nature and environment. For example, some cultures believe that they can control the nature and environment by adjusting them to their own needs; whereas, others consider humans to be a part of nature and environment. For that matter, a man should *adjust* to nature’s laws and forces; or *submit* to them; or finally, to try and *create a harmonious relationship*.

The submission to nature implies the understanding by which humans see themselves left to the mercy of physical forces of nature or/and to the will of God. In this context, the life is perceived as predetermined or merely a matter of the case. It is considered that the inevitable shouldn’t be changed with some kind of act of will, being that in the best case those actions are hopeless, and in the worst case they are blasphemous. For example, the expression “If it’s God’s will!” illustrates this cultural orientation’s way to language. Also, it affects the planning and goal settings in different cultures. Therefore, it is logical to expect that in particularism oriented cultures, goals will be blurry and undefined, subject to changes; while the planning is merely the expression of our intentions, and not strictly

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<sup>51</sup> F.Trompenaars and C.Hampden-Turner, *Riding th Waves of Culture*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1998

<sup>52</sup> F.Trompenaars and C.Hampden-Turner, *Riding th Waves of Culture*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1998

determined path. The cultures that are oriented towards the harmonious relationship with nature will also take into consideration the ecological factors and will take care about the conservation of nature and environment; for example, through recycling and using the ecological packaging, so that man's actions affect the environment's natural rhythm and harmony as less as possible. Finally, it is believed that domineering cultures, which tend to control the nature and environment set specific and unambiguous goals and plans that are expected to be realized at any cost. Hence, any exterior obstacle must be conquered.

Even though there are no official scientific data, it can be said that Serbian culture is traditionally oriented towards nature, alongside with Mediterranean, Arabic and some Asian cultures. This is something to have in mind when dealing with Western companies, since they may see the plan changing and not respecting the deadlines as sign of disorganization and inability to do the job well.

Western cultures managers often tend to impose more uniformed procedures and methods to other cultures and usually they succeed in it; precisely because some of the other cultures are used to adjusting and accepting strong exterior influences. And, even though, the original idea was to impose and to gain the control, it was realized because of different point of views-adjusting to exterior influences. Paradoxically, these two completely opposite situations in this case are shown as perfectly compatible.

#### **d) Cultural Dimension of Human Relationships**

##### **Horizontal Relationship (Individual-Group)**

A man is a social being. This statement is valid in all cultures. However, the level and the mode of an individual's integration into a social community significantly differ between cultures, which, perhaps, has the biggest influence on formation of

consciousness and value system of some culture's member. All scientists agree that there are two basic models of horizontal human relationships within a culture, therefore cultures can be oriented towards: *individualism*<sup>53</sup> and *collectivism*<sup>54</sup> (*communitarianism*<sup>55</sup>, that is *group*<sup>56</sup>). It depends if the identity of a person is based on individuality or on a social group.

Individualism has been described as “the primary basis for self-definition”, and collectivism as “the primary basis for group goals”. Normally, cultures differ according to which of these two processes they tend to give the priority; even though, a culture can contain both of these orientations. Do we connect with other people by discovering everyone's desires and then trying to overcome the differences? Or do we tend to emphasize some kind of common concept of public and collective wellbeing? Do parents teach their children to think in the first person singular “I” and to be independent; or they teach them to think in the first person plural “We” and take care of them in later years, and expect loyalty in return?

According to Hofstede's research, Serbian culture is traditionally collectivistic. However, new research done by Trompenaars shows that Serbia is in the group of individualistic countries, which coincides with new trend of changes in Serbia and its surroundings, because of the contacts with Western cultures and their influence.

### **Vertical Relationship (Hierarchy)**

One of the main questions of human existence, answered by many cultures, concerns the inequality between people. Inequality is a multidimensional concept and it can be displayed in form of prestige, wealth or power; in these three fields, different

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<sup>53</sup> Hofstede, Trompenaars, Kluckhohn and Strodbeck

<sup>54</sup> Greet Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences*, Sage Publications, London, 2000

<sup>55</sup> F.Trompenaars and C.Hampden-Turner, *Riding th Waves of Culture*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1998

<sup>56</sup> Kluckhohn and Strodbeck, *Variations in Value Orientations*, Peterson, New York, 1991

cultures do not give the same importance to the status. However, in every culture, successful sportsmen, artists and/or scientists have a special status, but only in some cultures people from these professions gain wealth, and rarely power. Generally speaking, in each culture there are two contrasting forces: the one that tends to make a distinction among statuses on all levels, while the other force tries to keep the equality among people by removing the concept of status on some level<sup>57</sup>. The battle between these two forces – status consistency and general inequality – is one of the basic dilemmas in every culture.

According to Trompenaars and Turner, in every culture some members are given the higher status than the others, which is an indicator that special attention should be paid on those people and their activities; and while some cultures base their selection on accomplishments, others base it on age, class, sex, education, etc. Therefore, cultures can be divided on those in which the status is *achieved* with personal acting, and those in which the status is *gained* based on characteristics that already exist.

In his research of cultural diversity, Geert Hofstede has also dealt with question of unequal distribution of power within a society. He calls this cultural dimension *the distance of power*, and it refers to the extent to which some institutions, organizations or societies accept the fact that the distribution of power is uneven. Often, the inequality in these cultures is expected and it's even desirable, since it is considered that the hierarchy where everyone has its own place is necessary for proper functioning of society. Usually, this refers those cultures that are oriented towards collectivism, and those who have less power depend on those who are more powerful. Also, in these cultures the privileges, and status symbols are expected and are very popular and welcome.

In cultures where the distance of power is small, the equality among people and equal opportunities are very important. The hierarchy also exists but it is for the functional reasons and

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<sup>57</sup> Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences*, Sage Publications, London, 2000

practicality. Usually, these cultures are oriented towards individualism and parents encourage their children to develop equal relationships; and within societies exists the interdependence among those that have more and less power.

Hofstede's research, done over decades ago, categorize Serbia among cultures with great distance of power. Nevertheless, it is obvious that now there is tendency towards reduction of this distance, which is evident in family relationships, but also in educational system and in business organizations.

### **The Essence of Interpersonal Relationships**

The essence of interpersonal relationships can be regarded from different aspects. However, it is basically divided on those cultures where relationships among people are the most important; they are omnipresent in people's lives. These relationships are longterm and lead to mutual closeness and deep understanding, such is Serbian culture. The other group are cultures that tend to separate very strictly business and private life, hence the relationships between people are more focused on realization of the assignment. This cultural difference is significantly emphasized in international communication.

Based on the level of expression of emotions, cultures can be divided into *affective* and *neutral*<sup>58</sup>. The amount of displayed emotions is often the result of social conventions. Along with Mediterranean, Serbian culture is classified among affective cultures and it is characterized by expression of emotions and gestures as reflection of engagement and interest for the interlocutor and assignments. On the other side, the members of neutral cultures do not have tendency to demonstrate their feelings in public. For example, in British and Northern American culture, as well as in Northwestern Europe, being able to control your emotions is sign of civilized behaviour. Therefore, norms of

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<sup>58</sup> F.Trompenaars and C.Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves of Culture*, MCGraw-Hill, New York, 1998

emotional neutrality reject anger, enthusiasm and every other intensive feeling, since it is considered to be unprofessional.

Extremely neutral and extremely affective cultures may encounter some issues in mutual business. That is, neutral person can be easily characterized as indifferent and cold, while affective person would seem as wayward and inconsistent. In these situations, the most important is to recognize differences and to restrain oneself from jumping into the conclusions based upon the amount of expressed emotions.

Closely associated with level of emotional expression is also the mode and the level we involve other people in our lives and on personal levels, and whether is that present in certain or in every situations of life. Based on this difference, Trompenaars and Turnere distinguish *specific* and *diffuse* cultures; that is *low context* and *high context* cultures.

In *specific* or *low context cultures* the manager differs the relationship with subordinate person during an assignment and some other situation. If he or she meets some of his employees in a coffee shop, on a golf field or during a vacation, that does not mean that his or her authority is reflected on any of these new situations. Wherever manager meets some of the employees, it is considered to be isolated, specific case; and private life is strictly separated from business relationships.

Nevertheless, in *diffuse cultures*, that is *high context cultures*, each sequence of life and level of personality permeate mutually. Manager Director has great authority everywhere. For that reason, if he is in charge of a company, his opinion about cooking will be better received than other employees' judgements. His taste for clothes and his worth are permeated with his managerial title, and he or she expect to be treated that way wherever he or she may go (at work, on a street, in a club or in a shop). In this case, private and business life overlap and permeate.

One of the problems that may occur when members of these two cultural categories meet is that the different space perception. That is, what one category may see as public space, the other may understand it as private and vice versa.



As mentioned before, Edward T. Hall<sup>59</sup> divides these categories into low context and high context cultures. The context determines how much information we need for effective communication, and how much of common knowledge is understood among the interlocutors. High context cultures, such as Serbian and French, believe that foreigners have to be informed about all circumstances before starting a business successfully, because in these cultures the person already has most of the information, and only small part of it is in coded, explicit part of a message. Coded, verbal message should be interpreted in the right way regarding the context, therefore it is necessary to be well informed and to understand nonverbal signs of communication. On the other side, low context cultures, as in the USA and the Netherlands, believe that communication regarding some concrete business contains all the necessary information for the interlocutor. The majority of these information is given in coded messages with usually literally meaning that does not need additional interpretation. These cultures are very flexible and adjustable; while the high context cultures are rich and subtle, but with lot of "baggage" and for that reason a foreigner has difficulties to completely adapt to them.

Specific low context cultures, especially North American and Dutch, with their strictly divided private sectors, have great freedom of direct speech. Therefore, the expression: "Nothing personal!", can be often heard in these cultures. In relationship with diffuse high context cultures, this kind of approach can be offensive. Specific cultures do not understand the concept of (*keeping/loosing*) *the face*, which can be threatened when some private information is exposed. Precisely, in order to keep the face, diffuse cultures prefer more indirect approach in communications. It is very important to avoid personal confrontation because it is impossible for the interlocutors not to take the remarks personally. Latin American, Asian (Japanese, Arabic) and Mediterranean cultures, in which contacts with family, friends, colleagues and clients are intense and close, and

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<sup>59</sup> Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture*, Anchor Books, New York, 1990

where people are deeply involved in personal relationships, it is important to keep and maintain them. The members of low context cultures, such as American, German, Swiss and Scandinavian, tend to differ strictly between personal and business relationships, and for that reason they always need detail and explicit information. The need of people from these cultures to get explicit information, may irritate the members of high context cultures and vice versa. That is, people from low context cultures have doubts when members of high context cultures do not give sufficient information. One of the greatest challenges of intercultural communication is finding the right context level in a given situation. Usually, within their own culture, people manage this adjusting automatically. But in different cultures their messages are often misinterpreted and misunderstood.

Finally, Geert Hofstede differs between cultural dimension of *masculinity* and cultural dimension of *femininity*. In cultures such as Japanese or North American, the masculinity dimension is developed and dominant values are success, money and material goods. Hence, great importance is attached to income, progress in business and social accomplishments, which leads to big competition in interpersonal relationships and great level of stress at work that, therefore, occupies central position in man's life. The educational system is directed towards favoring high productivity and economical increase

On the other hand, in cultures such as Serbian, Danish and Norwegian, in which the femininity dimension is expressed, prevail those social values that are oriented towards caring for others and environment conservation, and towards the quality of life in general. Significant importance is given to human contacts and friendly atmosphere. People work to live and interpersonal relationships have the priority over job. The educational system is directed towards enabling for adjusting in society and for interpersonal cooperation, and great significance is given to employment security.

## **CONCLUSION**

The research, conducted among students of European University, shows variations in almost every cultural dimension mentioned in this paper and in comparison with generations that participated in previous research, done by Hofstede and Trompenaars. These variations refer to expressing more individualism, less power distance and emphasized femininity. It is necessary to conduct new research that will follow this trend, in order to establish whether it will lead to changes in the very system of values in Serbian culture. Therefore, in that case, we can talk about new Serbian culture that adjusts to changes in regional and global surroundings, which is especially reflected in management and business via business cooperation among cultures.

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